

The University of Chicago

THE COMMENTARY OF DIONYSIUS
BAR SALIBI ON THE HISTORICAL
BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE FACULTY IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

1930

By
DANIEL HENRY SCHULZE

Private Edition, Distributed by
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CHAPTER ONE¹

JACOB BAR SALIBI

Jacob Bar Salibi was the outstanding literary figure in the Syrian world of the twelfth century A. D. Due to the paucity of biographical material only a bare sketch of his life is possible.

Bar Salibi was born early in the twelfth century A. D. in Melitene. He became deacon of the church in this city, and as such came in conflict with some of the leaders of the church on the question of God's providence in relation to history. As a result he was placed under an interdict, which was later raised and he was then made Bishop of Mar-ash, at which time he adopted the name Dionysius. Later Athanasius' successor transferred him to Amid, where he died in 1171 after filling the bishopric successfully for eleven years.

Bar Salibi was a profuse writer, chief among his works being his commentary on the Old and the New Testaments, which he wrote as the result of the exhortation of a "brother". Originality is all but absent in this work, it being chiefly a compilation. Many of his sources are quoted by name, but to most of them he refers with the indefinite "some say", "others say" and "another says". For many of his statements he cites no previous author, but by no means are all these original with him. The further discovery of his sources will have to await further work on various Syriac writers, now in process by the "Peshitta Project" of the University of Chicago.

1. Condensed.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MANUSCRIPT

The manuscript from which the translation of the Historical Books has been undertaken is known as "Mingana, Syr. 152" and is in the possession of Dr. Alphonse Mingana of Manchester, England, by whom permission to publish it was granted to the University of Chicago. The description of the manuscript has been furnished by him, from his catalog of Syriac Manuscripts, which is now in the press.

Description of the Manuscript

This manuscript is housed in the Colleges Library, Selly Oak, Birmingham, England. The size of the folios of this manuscript is 403 x 283 mm. It contains 311 leaves of two and three columns each, with forty-two lines to the column.

It is written with black ink in a neat, clear and handsome west Syrian hand and is profusely rubricated with headings in red, and a double set of red rulings. There are very few corrections. In many of the leaves the spiritual commentary is written in a more minute hand.

The manuscript comprises three sections: A) Ff. I-VI, of the beginning. The treatise of Jacob of Edessa on the Divine Economy of our Lord, and on the history and quotations of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Fathers who dealt with it. The Treatise has been finished by the copyist at the end of the manuscript, ff. 293-295a. B) Ff. 1-292b. The Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi on all the Books of the Old Testament. C) Ff. 304a-305a. Seven letters attributed to Dionysius Bar Salibi.

Section B, the Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi on the entire Old Testament, is the one with which we are here concerned, as that is the section from which our work has been taken, in view of the fact that it is included in the Peshitta project which has been undertaken, under the auspices of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, by Dr. Martin Sprengling and Dr. William C. Graham of the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures.

This section, as previously stated, contains the two commentaries on the Old Testament, running practically parallel in different columns, sometimes two to a sheet and sometimes three. In the case of the books dealt with in this dissertation he uses two columns throughout, the spiritual (rûhônôyô) occupying approximately two-thirds of the sheet and the literal (sû·rônôyô) one-third.

The order of the manuscript is as follows in section B:

Folios 1-23a.....	Genesis
" 23a-36b.....	Exodus
" 36b-44a.....	Leviticus
" 44b-55b.....	Numbers
" 55b-64a.....	Deuteronomy
" 64b-75b.....	Job
" 75b-77a.....	Joshua
" 77b-79b.....	Judges
" 79b-83a.....	Samuel
" 83b-89a.....	Kings
" 89b-96b.....	Psalms (by Moses Bar Kepha)

Folios 93b-153a.....	Psalms (by Bar Salibi)
" 153b-165a.....	Proverbs
" 165b-178b.....	Ecclesiastes
" 178b-186a.....	Song of Songs
Folio 186.....	Short chronological and historical notes on the prophets and kings and rulers of the Jews
Folios 187a-216b.....	Isaiah
" 217a-231b.....	Jeremiah
" 231b-251b.....	Ezekiel
" 251b-261b.....	Daniel
" 261b-264b.....	Portions from Hippolytus of Rome on Susanna
" 264b-286a.....	Minor Prophets, in the following order: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
" 264b-286a.....	Literal and spiritual comments on the Minor Prophets
" 286a-292b.....	Ecclesiasticus

In the case of the Books of Samuel and Kings there is no break when he passes from I Samuel to II Samuel or from I Kings to II Kings, whereas, when he passes from one book to the other in the case of the individual books he clearly marks the transition, both by means of rulings and spacing.

The Copyist

Little is known of the man who made this particular copy of the manuscript of Dionysius Bar Salibi. In the section of the manuscript dealt with in this particular dissertation there is no indication whatever as to his identity. He was a certain Matthew Bar Paul, a steward of the church of the

Mother of God in the fortified citadel in the province of Mosul. At the end of the Book of Genesis (fol. 23a, col. 2) he described himself as "thy poor servant, the deacon, Matthew the scribe," and at the end of the commentary on the Old Testament (fol. 293a, col. 2) as "the deacon..... a true orthodox Syrian and zealous in the faith."

Date of the Manuscript

Again, there is no indication as to the date of the manuscript to be found in the section dealt herewith, but at the end of Genesis the copyist wrote, "the year 1889 of the Christian era, in the month Elul (August-September)" Following the Book of Ecclesiasticus the copyist invokes the prayers of the readers upon himself. In the midst of this he states the date when the work of copying the manuscript was finished. He says: "it was finished in the Greek year 2202 and in the Christian year 1891, in Nisan (March-April) the 26th", thus being in the process of copying for somewhat less than two years, depending on the length of time consumed in copying Genesis.

The Text

That the copyist of this manuscript was an expert cannot be denied by any one who works through any considerable portion of it. That there are errors, as will be shown in the body of the translation, need not surprise us, but it is indeed remarkable that he was as accurate in his copying as he was. To make a copy of so extensive a manuscript is no trivial undertaking, especially in view of the difficulties under which the work had to

be done. The two chief forms of errors seem to be omissions, some of which the copyist himself noticed and inserted in the margin; and the misspelling of words, which was extremely difficult to avoid due to the similarity of some of the Syriac letters. Within the section of the manuscript dealt with in this dissertation there are several instances where the copyist repeated a number of words before it was apparent to him that he was writing a second time what he had already written. All but one of these he himself discovered and crossed out. If it was possible for him to rewrite several words at a time it was certainly just as likely that he would omit words or even whole lines, thus making it next to impossible to make a good translation, except as we make conjectural insertions, which at best may be far from the original. A collation with some of the older extant manuscripts would doubtless remove many of these difficulties, but since they are not available at the present time that was impossible.

CHAPTER THREE¹

SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

In this commentary on the Historical Books of the Old Testament, as throughout the rest of the commentary, there are many quotations from the books commented upon. In view of the Peshitta project of the University of Chicago the quotations of Bar Salibi have been collated with the Ambrosian Codex and the Lee and Urumia editions of the Peshitta, for the purpose of determining, if possible, the source of his quotations.

Nature of the Quotations

By this collation the following facts concerning the nature of the quotations have been brought to light:

- (1) In a large number of quotations the "waw" prefixed to the first word of the Peshitta text has been omitted by Bar Salibi.
- (2) In five instances, where there is no "waw" in the Peshitta, Bar Salibi prefixed one to the first word of the quotation.
- (3) The "daleth" prefixed to the word in the Peshitta is omitted by Bar Salibi in many of his quotations.
- (4) In six instances the "daleth" is prefixed to the first word of the quotation, where none is found in the Peshitta.
- (5) In one case "lamedh" is changed to "daleth".

1. Greatly condensed.

(6) In one quotation Bar Salibi omits both the "waw" and the "daleth" which are prefixed to the first word in the Peshitta.

(7) In three instances the quotation is introduced by *ad*.

Survey of Quotations

A survey of this collation of quotations points out the following facts concerning the sources of Bar Salibi's quotations:

(1) Of the 358 passages quoted by Bar Salibi 134 are in exact agreement with the Ambrosian Codex and the Lee and Urumia editions of the Peshitta.

(2) Most of those which are not in exact agreement with these editions vary only in minor details, many of which changes are necessary, due to the method of inserting the quotations in the midst of a sentence of his own.

(3) Many of the quotations are very fragmentary.

(4) In the compound appellation of the deity (Lord God) one of the names is omitted as a rule.

(5) Variant spellings are found (especially of the name "Israel").

(6) Sometimes different words are used, which are practically the same in meaning as the ones displaced.

(7) The word order is often changed.

(8) Frequently variant forms of the verb are used (e. g. the imperfect for the perfect).

Thus, this collation does not furnish us any absolute proof concerning the source of Bar Salibi's quotations, but the evidence indicates the use of

the Peshitta, especially since almost half of the quotations are in exact agreement with the Peshitta and in the case of the others, where there is no complete agreement, the changes are minor ones, many of which are imperative due to the method of their insertion in the midst of his discussion. Some of the minor changes are in all probability due to loose quotation, probably from memory, or to careless quotation.

Collation of Quotations¹

In this collation the references to the quotations are given in abbreviated form--e.g. 75b.1.2.1:2 refers to folio 75b, column 1, line 2, and the quotation found here is taken from Joshua 1:2, which is the book from which the following examples are taken. In the collation A. stands for the Ambrosian Codex, L. for the Lee and U. for the Urumia edition of the Peshitta. The collation follows:

Joshua

75b.1.2.1:2	ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ	A.L.U. Same.	
75b.1.3.1:3	ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ	A.L.U.	ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ
75b.1.5.1:4	ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ	L.U.	ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ
75b.1.8.1:11	ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ	A.L.U. Same.	
75b.1.16.2:9	ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ ܡܨܪ ܚܝ ܡܨܪ	A.L.U. Same.	

1. Only a few examples of the quotations are given herewith, namely those found in the commentary on Joshua.

75b.2.2.1:1	طبا طبا ; طبا طبا	A.L.U.	 طبا
76a.1.11.5:2	طبا طبا طبا	A.L.U.	 طبا
76a.1.24.5:9	طبا طبا طبا	A.L.U.	 طبا
76a.1.30.5:15	طبا طبا طبا	A.	 طبا
76a.2.1.3:1	طبا طبا طبا	A. طبا L.U.	 طبا
76b.1.32.10:13	طبا طبا طبا	A.L. طبا ... طبا U.	طبا طبا طبا
76b.2.31.7:19	طبا طبا طبا	A.L.U.	 طبا طبا طبا
	طبا طبا		طبا طبا

CHAPTER FOUR

BAR SALIBI AS A SOURCE FOR BAR HEBRAEUS

The problem as to whether Bar Hebraeus used Bar Salibi's works as a source in the preparation of his Storehouse of Mysteries has not been definitely determined. Only as more of the work of the two men is studied and compared can we arrive at definite conclusions.

We state here briefly some of the evidence thus far offered. Bar Salibi's name is found only once in the Bar Hebraeus manuscripts. It has been shown that even this reference was added by a later copyist, since the earlier manuscripts now in the possession of the Peshitta project editors do not contain this reference, whereas it is found in the later manuscripts only. But even though this is the case, it seems almost incredible to suppose that Bar Hebraeus should have overlooked the works of so prominent a writer as Bar Salibi, in the preparation of his work.

T. P. R. Jacobsen, in his Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi on the Book of Job, page seventeen, comes to the conclusion that Bar Hebraeus did not use Bar Salibi so far as the Book of Job is concerned. The prevailing opinion, however, is that Bar Hebraeus' Commentary on the New Testament is based very largely upon the work of Bar Salibi. Watson Boyes in his Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi on the Book of Genesis, page fifty-one, comes to the conclusion that "Bar Hebraeus was indebted to Bar Salibi for a great deal of his material." What, then, is the evidence afforded by a comparison of the work of the two on the Historical Books of the Old Testament?

A comparison of the two again reveals no definite proof that Bar Hebraeus was dependent upon Bar Salibi for any of his material. However, there are some similarities which are very striking. In the first place it is very noticeable that the two very largely quote and comment upon the same passages of Scripture. That this should be mere coincidence does not seem likely, for many of the passages dealt with do not seem to be of surpassing importance, even from their viewpoint. However, there is another indication which may be of significance in this respect, namely, the nature of the comments which are made upon these passages. In many instances the content of the comments of Bar Hebraeus is very similar to that of Bar Salibi, and in some passages even the wording is practically identical. That this, again, should be mere coincidence does not seem very likely to me. A few of these passages are given below to illustrate their similarity. In his comment on Joshua 1:2 Bar Salibi says: "Moses died and did not bring the people into the promised land, as also the law and the prophets were not able to direct men to their former inheritance." Bar Hebraeus, on the same passage, says: "Moses died and could not bring the people into the promised land. Neither the law nor the prophets could tread the path to the Kingdom of Heaven." Again, Bar Salibi on Judges 5:8 says: "i.e. Deborah, who arose a prophetess among the people, something which is not according to custom, but new." Bar Hebraeus says: "i.e. God chose a woman to rise up at the head of a great nation, and prophesy, a new thing which is not customary." Others might be cited but these will suffice to show their close similarity. This agreement

does not extend only through the books of Joshua and Judges but is evident in the books of Sammel and Kings as well. Bar Hebraeus seems to have used Bar Salibi as a mine of material for his work, as the close agreement of their exegetical notes indicates.

That Bar Salibi was a source for Bar Hebraeus' work is further indicated by the fact that in Mss. 12 and 19 of Bar Hebraeus, in the possession of the Peshitta project editors, quotations from Bar Salibi are frequently found in the margin. These are added for one of two reasons, either for the purpose of adding comments which Bar Hebraeus had omitted in his work, or for the purpose of supplying comments on such passages as Bar Hebraeus had omitted entirely. In other words, it seems to have been a sort of filling-out-process of Bar Hebraeus from the work of Bar Salibi.

On the other hand, there are some outstanding differences between the work of the two, which indicate that Bar Hebraeus was not a mere copyist and solely dependent on Bar Salibi. Though he comments on many of the same passages which Bar Salibi treats, the fact remains that he comments on many other passages which Bar Salibi does not mention. Again, even though his exegetical notes are very much like those of Bar Salibi, it is strikingly noticeable how much more compact they are and how much more orderly his arrangement of them is. Bar Salibi's exegetical notes are very much more extensive and in an extremely chaotic state as far as the arrangement is concerned.

One further difference between the two lies in the fact that Bar Hebraeus is constantly inserting grammatical notes upon the text which he quotes, while Bar Salibi makes no references whatever to grammar, so it is evident that this particular feature was either original with Bar Hebraeus or he was dependent upon someone else than Bar Salibi for it.

Thus it will be seen that, even though Bar Hebraeus was not slavishly dependent on Bar Salibi, it is evident that he made free use of his work, and it seems that he took just enough out of Bar Salibi to make Bar Salibi's work unnecessary and consequently unpopular, thereby making his own work more popular.

PART TWO

CHAPTER TWO

THE LITERAL COMMENTARY

Joshua¹

The literal commentary of Joshua the son of Nun as briefly as possible.

1:1 "and it came to pass after the death of Moses, etc.," i.e., by the fact that he called him the servant of Moses, he made known his humility. 1:5 In spite of the fact that God made him equal with Moses, as in the passage he said, "as I was with Moses I will be with thee," he humbled himself: but not only the disciple of Moses called he himself, but also even his minister. The ancient Law was directed into five books by Moses, but Joshua I have represented as Jesus the Messiah. Moses died and did not bring the people into the promised land; as not even the law and the prophets were able to direct men to their former inheritance; but they enter and receive the inheritance by the Messiah. Why was Joshua in need of sending out spies when God commanded him to enter and inherit the land? We answer: not because he lacked confidence but because fear should be removed from the dubious people, for it was not yet confirmed in the Lord: and, as is the custom which prevails in the world, places are examined by spies. Again, because it had a fearful heart, for it was in great fear of the nations, and knowing what

1. The translation of the literal commentary of Joshua only is given herewith, as an example of the type of Bar Salibi's work.

report they would bring, he sent them out so that the people should be encouraged. How did the nations which were in the land of Canaan sin more than all the nations which are in the entire earth, which were slain by Israel? We say that formerly they acted impiously, more than all the nations under heaven, and because of this they were destroyed; again, because they heard (of) the miracles which God performed in the presence of the people in Egypt and in the wilderness, and they did not repent; and finally that the Jordan was divided and the people and its belongings went over; they both heard and saw but did not show penitence. 4:8,20. Joshua brought up twelve stones from the river, 4:9 and he brought down twelve stones from the dry land, and he built them in the midst of the river, so that this should be a sign to the (following) generations, that unless the Jordan had been divided, it would have been impossible that they should be set up in the midst of the waters. 5:2. "He circumcised them a second time," i.e., this word: "the second time," does not indicate that they were circumcised once (before), but that through Joshua the law of circumcision was renewed, as it had started with Abraham; after the departure from Egypt, Moses did not command that they should be circumcised because they were dwelling in the wilderness, and were far removed from commingling with the nations. In Egypt they were circumcised that they might be distinguished from the Gentile nations, therefore, the circumcision was given for a sign that they should be distinguished from the Gentile nations. 5:2. They were

circumcised with a flint knife, because its wound is sweet (cleansed) and its healing is simple (easy), and it was a type of their heart, which was hard as flint; others say that he circumcised them with a flint because the matter would be more difficult (serious), so as to prove them, whether they loved God or not. 5:9. "This day I have caused the reproach of the Egyptians to pass over," i.e., that they had been circumcised in the service of their bondage, but from this day and henceforth, (they should be circumcised) in freedom of service as Abraham in the land of promise. In another way, I caused the reproach of the Egyptians to pass over from you because they were reproaching you in that ye did not keep the covenant of your God in the matter of the circumcision. 5:15. "Take off your sandals from your feet," i.e., because of the battle which he was about to engage in. Again, because the skin was taken from a dead thing, and because I have come that I may help you. 5:12. The manna ceased, because there was no need of it, since wheat and barley were found; it would be loathsome and unsatisfying if it remained (continued). Again, if it continued it would have been considered that it was something natural and came to be through the medium of air, and that the sustenance of the people was not by divine providence. 5:14. The captain of the hosts who appeared to Joshua, they say, was one of the angels who was sent for his encouragement. And this, that he appeared with his sword drawn, was to stir him up for the battle and victory. Others say that he was the Messiah concerning whom revelation was made in the likeness of an angel, and it is known

from this, that afterward he called him Lord, and he is the messenger of the great mind of the father. 6:25. Joshua kept Rahab, the harlot, alive, but not the shame, so that the nations should know that Joshua's door was open for penitence and a place of refuge before them. 6:20. Jericho was opened without a battle, for it was not opened with a battle because of the height and impregnability of its walls. But another (says) lest the people should think that through their own power they subdued the city, and because of this he showed them preternatural marvels: that the walls fell at the sound of the horns, and the circumambulation of the ark. 6:3. God was patient with the inhabitants of Jericho for six days, so that they should fear and repent, for he had commanded Joshua: "offer first the right hand to the cities, and if they are obedient they shall not be destroyed."¹ But he made its booty a devoted thing, that is to say, a thing apart to the Lord, because they should repent and the treasury of the Lord should be enriched, and because it was opened through the preternatural powers of the Lord, its spoil should be brought to the Lord. 6:26. Again, in the seventh day Joshua cursed whosoever would build Jericho, first, because it dared to fight with them after the river was divided, and again, because he had patience with them seven days so that they should repent, but they did not repent. He commanded that Jericho should not be built, because the Lord had destroyed it, and so that it might remain for a marvel and an amazement and that the people might be moved not to turn aside

1. Cf. Deuteronomy 20:10; Joshua 9:7, 11, 15.

from the Lord. Ahab,¹ the king, dared to build it and received the curse of Joshua. 7:1ff. God made no manifestations concerning Achar as he did concerning the devoted thing, because he wanted him to live and come to repentance. 7:14. He commanded that they should cast lots, that in the mean time he should turn and be converted. 7:19. "Give acknowledgment to God," i.e., confess before every man that God is the knower of all, because thou hast supposed that the Lord does not see and know. 7:25. He commanded that there should be a stoning against him, because after he was found guilty, he confessed. 7:24. He brought forth the stoning upon his sons and his house, and his possessions, although these had not sinned, so that he would cast fear upon the people, lest they should be seized² in the transgression of the commandment. If indeed one of them forgot himself (be deceived) and be emboldened in spite of the killing because of the completion of his desire, he might have pity upon his sons, and his house and his possessions, since these did not sin, so that he shall cast fear upon the people lest they should be seized and stoned as the sons of Achar. But it is not written that his wife was stoned, possibly either because she was dead, or because she was not pleased with the theft and reproved him but he did not hearken, and she feared Achar and did not make the thing known concerning him. 7:24. All his possessions and all that he had should be burned with fire, lest there should remain the memory of that which he transgressed

1. 1 Kings 16:34.

2. Lest an epidemic should come upon them.

against the devoted thing, but all of the possessor and his possessions should perish, and no man should inherit the possessions of an evil doer. 9:27. He made the Gibeonites hewers of wood and drawers of water, that through them should be fulfilled that which had been said: "Canaan shall be their servant,"¹ i.e., to the sons of Shem. 10:27. At the time of the setting of the sun they were to take the corpse down from the wood, because it was written in the law, lest they should be eaten by the wild beasts, and lest corruption should set in and the odor of their corpses offend people. 11:6ff. Again, he commanded that they should burn the towns, in order that the memory of the builders should be forgotten and they in turn should labor and toil with the buildings. And perhaps there were images of gods in the houses of the towns; and he commanded that the houses, both the painted and the unpainted, should be utterly destroyed, and because he commanded that they should not commingle with the nations, because they were unclean, he also commanded that their houses should be completely destroyed, because, like themselves, they were unclean; and if the houses were unclean, how much more their inhabitants! 22:10ff. The children of Reuben built an altar beyond the Jordan, when no altar was permitted except in one place. The children of Israel hindered them lest, after building it, they should sacrifice upon it, and it would be an occasion to them, that everywhere they

1. Genesis 9:26.

would sacrifice to the idols, for the priesthood was Levi's and he was to rear up altars and sacrifice, and not the other tribes. However, when the people had ascertained that they built the altar, not because of sacrifices, sacrificial offerings and the priesthood, but because of an evidence of the fear of the Lord they left them alone. 23:12. Joshua commanded that they should not be intermarried with the Gentiles which remained among them, although they had made peace with them, lest their daughters should lead astray their sons after their gods and their customs as it happened to Solomon. He summoned them at the end to testify whether they were able to serve the Lord or not, and he performed the ceremony because of the hardness of their heart and their inclination toward foreign gods and the customs of the Gentiles, so that they should serve God willingly, because, although he had saved them, yet he did not wish to lead them into his service by compulsion, although he desired that all men should live. The literal commentary of Joshua the son of Nun is finished. May Dionysius Bar Salibi, who collected, and labored in the Book, be pitied.

